

# Creating an After-School Program for Your PETE Majors' Middle School Field Experience

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*Universities that have trouble finding adequate practicum opportunities for their teacher candidates may want to consider this alternative.*

Providing opportunities for teacher candidates to use the theory learned in the college classroom in a “real physical education class” is essential to the preparation of outstanding teachers (Wiegand, Bulger, & Mohr, 2004). This can be accomplished easily when sufficient quality placements are available locally. However, difficulties arise if the university has so many physical education teacher education (PETE) majors that they overwhelm a small school system. The author's university faced this dilemma.

Longwood University is located in rural Prince Edward County, Virginia. The local public school system has one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, all grouped in an educational complex located two miles from the university. The next closest public school system is 20 minutes away. With these limitations, even a small number of PETE majors needing field experiences can exceed the local schools' capacity. Therefore, Longwood University's Department of Health, Recreation, and Kinesiology (HRK) designed a practicum experience that satisfied the needs of the PETE students and provided a service to the community. The purpose of this article is to describe the organization of this innovative program.

In conjunction with Prince Edward County Middle School, the HRK department initiated an after-school program three years ago called *PE x 3*. The title represents Prince Edward, physical education, and promoting excellence. The program was held once a week after school for 10 weeks, and the instructors were the PETE majors enrolled in the middle school methods course. This program served as a field experience for the teacher candidates and provided a free after-school program for middle school students.

The following sections will outline (1) how the program was established, (2) the organization of the program, (3) the implementation of pedagogical content into the field experience, and (4) the challenges faced while implementing the program. To avoid confusion, the college students will be referred to as teacher candidates throughout this article.

## Establishing the Program

The concept of initiating an after-school program grew out of a brainstorming session with the superintendent of Prince Edward County Public Schools over the summer. However, there were many steps from conception to completion. This section will outline the basic steps necessary to implement a program of this nature.

The most important decision was whether or not to begin an after-school program. Initiating, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating such a program were much more labor intensive for the university than assigning students to schools. Once the author



During fitness stations, Brian Raska shows eighth-grader Christian Banks the proper techniques for using body bars for resistance exercise.

decided to develop the program, approval and support from the department chair and dean of the College of Education and Human Services were obtained.

Since Longwood University's gymnasiums were constantly used for classes, athletics, and intramurals, it was decided that *PE x 3* would be held at the middle school. Using the local school also minimized transportation problems for the middle school students.

However, moving a practicum off campus required additional considerations and responsibilities. Support from school administrators was essential. Two administrators must approve a project like this: the building principal and his or her immediate supervisor. As noted, the program had the support of the superintendent of Prince Edward County Schools from the beginning; now it needed approval from the middle school principal. After preparing a presentation on the project, the author and the HRK department chair met with the middle school principal and her administrative staff. These individuals also endorsed the program. Once the administrators approved, communication with the school's physical education staff was crucial. The middle school physical educators were instrumental to the success of the program. They distributed fliers, allowed the middle school methods class to come into their classes for a day, and helped organize the facilities for afternoon use. In addition, they promoted *PE x 3* to all of the middle school students and encouraged several who could benefit from the program—specifically those students who were overweight, had poor motor-skill performance, or needed more structure and supervision during after-school hours.

During the first meeting, the middle school administrators

received an overview of the program, which also included the proposed curriculum. Since Prince Edward County Middle School does not have any after-school athletics in the fall, the gymnasium, cafeteria, and outside fields were all available for use. In addition, the administration received a complete student supervision plan for the period of time between the dismissal bell and the departure of the last child. The administration agreed that the students would be able to ride the activity bus home after the program each week. Longwood University supplied all of the sports equipment.

Since beginning *PE x 3*, several methods have been used to "get the word out" to the middle school students and their parents. The most successful technique was to place a small article in the local newspaper providing information about the program. In addition, each teacher candidate spent an entire day at the middle school, where he or she taught part of the lesson and then participated with the students for the remainder of the class period. The teacher candidates recruited students into *PE x 3* just by their enthusiasm and by explaining what would be taught in the after-school program. Informational fliers and permission forms were distributed to interested students at the end of each class. The physical education teachers supported the program and also distributed and collected the permission forms.

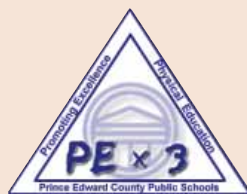
Creating a flier that provided all the needed information was very important. Parents needed to have the who, what, when, and where on one piece of paper. In addition the parents were told that the program was *not* recess, free play, or dodgeball. A contact number the parents could call while the program was in session was also necessary. Figure 1 contains the flier that was developed.

The flier was stapled to the permission form. With this procedure, the middle school students had only one packet of material to take home. The parents could keep the flier at home and just return the completed permission form to the school. Due to the physical activity required in the program as well as the pedagogical assessments required of the teacher candidates, some modifications needed to be made to traditional permission forms. To ensure a safe experience for the students, parents were asked to disclose allergies or other conditions that might affect the student's involvement so that precautions could be taken.

The permission form also included specifics about photographing the middle school students. During *PE x 3*, every session was videotaped for educational purposes. Reviewing the videotapes enabled the teacher candidate to evaluate his or her performance, allowed the author to assess the development of teaching skills, and provided a record of each teaching session. In addition to the assessment purposes, small portions of the tapes were used by the teacher candidates with their teaching portfolios. However, no middle school students were identified by name.

Digital photos were taken every week as well. These photos were used for program promotion through the university's web site and the local newspaper. During the last meeting, all of the photos were shown in a PowerPoint presentation

Figure 1. Program Flier



## Longwood University

presents

### ***PE x 3***

**a physically active after-school program for grades 6-8**

Beginning Wednesday September 14

Longwood University, in partnership with Prince Edward County Public Schools, is offering Wednesday afternoon fitness and sports activities for students in grades 6-8. This PE x 3 (Prince Edward, physical education, promoting excellence) Program will include fitness, games, and athletic skill development. Some of the skills to be taught include fitness, cooperative games, and lifetime sports skills, including golf and tennis. All sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, regardless of ability level or disability, are eligible to attend. Longwood University students who plan to become physical education teachers will provide individual attention for the middle school students as they learn new skills. The teacher candidates are under the direct supervision of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of author), a physical educator with over 30 years of teaching experience (21 in Virginia public schools). For more information on the PE x 3 Program, please contact Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ in the Department of Health, Recreation, and Kinesiology at Longwood University (XXX) XXX-XXXX or email at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX@XXXXX.edu

If you need to reach your child during the program, please call: [Cell phone number listed.]

#### **Basic Information on PE x 3**

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**Who:** The program is open to any 6th, 7th, or 8th grader at Prince Edward County Middle School.

**When:** PE x 3 will be held every Wednesday from 3:30 until 6:00. The program begins September 14 and ends November 16. Students may ride the activity bus home at 6:00. Note: When Daylight Savings Time ends, PE x 3 will end at 5:00. This change is due to the activity bus leaving at 5:00 beginning in November.

**What:** PE x 3 is a skill-based program that is tied directly to the Virginia Standards of Learning for Physical Education. There will be three activities, each lasting 45 minutes. Students will rotate to all three activities each afternoon. Some of the planned activities are:

1. Fitness (step aerobics)—students will learn to find their resting pulse rate, compute their target heart rates, and use heart rate monitors to make sure they are reaching their fitness goals. (SOL 7.3 a, b, c; 7.5 b; and 8.4 a, b, c). Students will also learn how to develop their own fitness plan.
2. Skill development—Students will learn the basics of tennis, soccer, and beginning golf skills (SOL 7.1a; 7.2 c and 8.1a; 8.2c). All equipment will be provided.
3. Cooperative Activities—Students will be able to use cooperative games and team-building challenges to learn problem-solving skills (SOL 7.4 b, c and 8.5 a, c).

**How to register:** Return the attached form to your child's physical education teacher.

**What to wear:** This is an activity-based program. Students should wear comfortable clothing, socks, and tennis shoes. Jewelry should be removed before activity. Clothing should meet all PEMS dress codes.

**Cost:** This program is provided by Longwood University at no cost to all Prince Edward County Middle School 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students.

**What PE x 3 is not:** Free play, recess, dodgeball, or unstructured physical activity. PE x 3 will be structured, organized, and supervised at all times.

Figure 2. Registration Form

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact (Name, relation, and phone number) \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child currently participate in any sport or physical activity outside of school time?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, please explain:

Does your child have any physical impairment that would impact his/her participation in physical activity or sport?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, please explain:

Will your child ride the activity bus home? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what is the number of that bus? \_\_\_\_\_.

I give my permission for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student) to participate in Longwood University's *PE x 3* after-school program and be videotaped during each lesson.

My child's photo may be published on Longwood University's web site, local newspapers, or for educational purposes. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_.

Parent/guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

to the middle schoolers. On the permission form, parents could request that their child be excluded from the digital photography. However, the videotaping was essential to the practicum experience, so parental approval for videotaping was a requirement for admission to the program. Figure 2 contains the permission form used in *PE x 3*.

The reverse side of the permission form contained a release form, which was designed to serve as a deterrent to litigation in the event a child was injured during the program. The university was consulted to determine which type of release document was required. The one selected for *PE x 3* was very similar to those required of students attending summer sports camps. Other PETE programs replicating *PE x 3* should consult their institution about policies or guidelines for a release form.

Since the middle school's facilities were used, the author had to work closely with the school to ensure that their rules

were followed, that behavior management was consistent with school mandates, and that concerns about safety were addressed. Whenever something questionable arose, the administration was contacted immediately.

### Organization of the Program

Completed permission forms were turned in the Friday before the program began. This gave the author time to check them for signatures and parental comments, to contact parents about any medical concerns, and to determine the amount of equipment needed for each activity group.

The first day the students attended the program, they all met in the cafeteria. The author discussed the program's rules and protocols with the teacher candidates during this time. There was only one rule: show respect for one another, the school, and the equipment. Four behavior protocols were used: (1) when the teacher candidate counted "one, two,

three,” all activity stopped and equipment was placed on the ground; (2) no student could leave the activity area without a teacher candidate’s permission; (3) students walked with a teacher candidate to the next activity; and (4) no child could leave the school grounds without the knowledge of the author. At the end of the day, most of the students rode the activity bus home. However, each child who left with an adult had to tell those responsible, “That’s my Mom; I’m going with her,” or “That’s my brother; I’m riding home with him.” This protocol was stressed each week.

After the rules and protocols were taught, the middle school students were then divided into home groups designated by the colors red, blue, and purple. The specific meeting location for each group was established, and each student received a name tag in his or her group color. This organizational protocol was followed for the entire program, so the students knew where to go when the dismissal bell rang. One teacher candidate was assigned to organize each group, while the others assisted with locker room supervision, or with setting up the equipment needed for the various activities.

At the beginning of every session, as the students received name tags and attendance was checked, announcements were made and one of the program requirements was discussed. Each student was required to compliment at least two others some time during the afternoon. At the conclusion of the day, everyone met again to discuss the afternoon’s events. The middle school students were asked how they demonstrated fair play or assisted another person and when they gave compliments. This emphasis on the affective domain helped to improve students’ social skills when working with others in physical activities and was a goal of a quality after-school physical education program (Mohnsen, 2003). The other goals of a quality program, according to Mohnsen, are to

provide assistance to the youngster who needs extra help with motor skills; build on a youngster’s natural desire to move and play (i.e., create intramural and recreational opportunities); help students develop a ‘can do’ attitude; and provide opportunities for participation in activities of choice (i.e., orienteering); and provide students with moderate amounts of exercise as recommended by the 1996 Surgeon General’s report on physical activity. (p. 28)

Using these goals and the national standards for physical education (National Association for Sport and Physical Education [NASPE], 2004) as guidelines, *PE x 3* offered a variety of physical education activities for the students (NASPE standards 1 and 2). Three content areas were addressed for 45 minutes apiece each week. The three groups of students rotated through all three activities each week. Every three weeks, new activities were introduced. The only activity that stayed constant throughout the entire 10 weeks was fitness (NASPE standard 4).

The skill-focused activities of golf, tennis, flag football, speedball, and volleyball were offered in three-week units. The team sports functioned as extensions of the physical education program, while the individual sports offered

Table 1. Rotation of Activities by Groups and Weeks

#### Weeks 1-3 Rotation

- Red: Fitness ← Cooperative Games ← Golf
- Blue: Cooperative Games ← Golf ← Fitness
- Purple: Golf ← Fitness ← Cooperative Games

#### Weeks 4-6 Rotation

- Red: Fitness ← Volleyball ← Tennis
- Blue: Volleyball ← Tennis ← Fitness
- Purple: Tennis ← Fitness ← Volleyball

#### Weeks 7-9 Rotation

- Red: Fitness ← Flag football ← Speedball
- Blue: Flag football ← Speedball ← Fitness
- Purple: Speedball ← Fitness ← Flag football

#### Week 10

- Small-sided flag football games with teacher candidates and middle schoolers playing together.
- Awards Assembly: Present middle school students with certificates and show PowerPoint presentation of program.

enrichment experiences for the students. Social behavior (NASPE standard 5) was taught within every activity. In addition, cooperative games were always included as an activity during the first three weeks of the program. Table 1 shows the group rotations and activities typically taught during *PE x 3*.

### Implementation of Pedagogical Content

The teacher candidates enrolled in the middle school methods class had already completed the elementary methods class and the corresponding field experience. They had learned to develop lesson plans, peer taught one another, taught students in grades K-5, and developed unit plans.

In the HRK department, all practica experiences are scheduled as specific lab times to aid in scheduling. In the middle school methods class, the teacher candidates met for three hours of class and an additional three hours of lab each week. The *PE x 3* program was scheduled as a lab from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. every Wednesday. At the beginning of the semester, three hours of class and three hours of lab were spent preparing the teacher candidates for their *PE x 3* experiences, which began in the fourth week of Longwood’s semester. These were very concentrated lessons because there was a great deal to cover in those 18 hours. Course and practicum content covered before the first day of the after-school program appear in table 2.

During the first lab meeting at the beginning of the



Table 2. Course and Field Experience Content Covered Before the Program

Week	Tuesday Lecture	Wednesday Lab	Thursday Lecture
1	Course overview Description of <i>PE x 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of middle school students</li> <li>• Teacher-candidates assigned to teaching groups</li> <li>• Groups develop 5 minute overview of first topic to share at middle school next week.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middle school curriculum and state standards in physical education and NASPE standards</li> <li>• Planning lessons and lesson assessments</li> </ul>
2	Spend the day at the middle school to encourage students to sign up for the program and to observe characteristics and behaviors of middle school students.	Students work with group to prepare pre-assessments and first lesson for <i>PE x 3</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson plans are submitted and critiqued as a group.</li> <li>• Behavior management and protocols are established for the program.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Techniques of supervision</li> <li>• Learn to operate video equipment and wireless microphones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer teaching of lessons (lessons are videotaped)</li> <li>• Feedback is provided to teacher candidates from peers and author.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer teaching of lessons (continued)</li> <li>• Feedback is provided to teacher candidates from peers and author.</li> </ul>
4	Program organization and procedures for the first day	First day of <i>PE x 3</i> at the middle school	

semester, teacher candidates were placed in three groups. The perfect organization would be three groups of three teacher candidates. With three instructional times and three content areas being covered, each teacher candidate would teach every week. However, groups of four were also workable, as they provided coverage in the event of illness or approved university commitments (e.g., intercollegiate athletic events). Even with groups of four, the teacher candidates were responsible for teaching seven lessons during the 10-week program.

As the number of PETE majors expands, additional activities could be offered. Rather than having the same three activities for everyone, the number of the activities could be increased to four or five and the middle school students could be allowed to select specific activities. For example, tennis could be offered at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. However, fitness should always be an integral part of the program.

The PETE majors planned their lessons while working in their groups and with constant feedback from the author. After the first lesson and the pre-assessment of skills, the groups planned the next few lessons. Lesson plans for the

Wednesday after-school program were submitted electronically by 6:00 a.m. on Tuesday. Since there were only three lesson plans to evaluate, the author had time to make suggestions and return the plans during the methods class that day. Each methods class included time to discuss planning. Teachable moments were seized, and solutions to problems were brainstormed.

On the first day of *PE x 3*, the teacher candidates were required to be prepared with lesson plans, supervision assignments, and equipment. They were responsible for obtaining and returning any needed sport equipment from the HRK department. In addition, each group needed a video camera, a videotape for each person teaching, a tripod, an extension cord, and a wireless microphone every week. Extra batteries for the microphones were kept with the video cameras.

Once instruction began, teacher candidates who were not teaching had other responsibilities. During the first few weeks, the teacher candidates learned about the students and became accustomed to middle schoolers. This process was less intimidating when other members of their group acted as class assistants. Their peers helped students with special needs or assisted with equipment. This was not team teach-

Figure 3. Observation of Teaching

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Professionally dressed:    Yes        No

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### Class Management

- ☐ Prepares equipment and makes it easily accessible
- ☐ Addresses all safety concerns
- ☐ Positions students so all can see and hear with fewest distractions
- ☐ Avoids excessive teacher talk
- ☐ Organizes to maximize activity time (>50% of students on task >50% of lesson time)
- ☐ Is in control of class

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### Getting & Maintaining Attention

- ☐ Uses stop signal to get students' attention
- ☐ Speaks to students only when they are quiet and listening
- ☐ Projects voice
- ☐ Has no detracting verbal behavior
- ☐ Has no detracting nonverbal behaviors
- ☐ Is a catalyst for student motivation (enthusiasm)

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### Demonstration & Explanations

- ☐ Introduces the skill and its purpose (set induction)
- ☐ Links skill to previous knowledge
- ☐ Breaks skill down into key points (critical components)
- ☐ Provides accurate demonstration(s)
- ☐ Reviews 3-4 key points
- ☐ Provides closure that promotes and reinforces learning

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### Transition to Skill Practice

- ☐ Designs appropriate progressions, if necessary
- ☐ Clearly shows students how they are expected to practice
- ☐ Moves class into a skill practice quickly
- ☐ Ensures that students are on-task and practicing correctly

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### Provides Appropriate Feedback

- ☐ Circulates, keeping back to the wall
- ☐ Gives specific feedback
- ☐ Stays with student after giving feedback
- ☐ Uses effective questioning skills
- ☐ Uses cue words repeatedly

Observer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Table 3. Methods Used to Assess Quality of Instruction

Week	Teacher Candidate	Faculty
<b>Weeks 1 - 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher candidate watches video and uses rubric to evaluate teaching.</li> <li>• He or she writes a two-page paper. The first page addresses positives about the lesson, personal weaknesses, and plans for change. The second page addresses student achievement as it relates to the lesson objectives.</li> </ul>	Watches each video and addresses strengths and weaknesses in a narrative form.
<b>Week 4-6</b>	Peer evaluation of teacher candidate using rubric. Peer must also address 5 particular areas of strength and 5 areas for growth. Teacher candidate must watch video and respond to information from peer.	After reading reflections, author selects approximately 1/3 of videos to watch and evaluate.
<b>Week 7</b>	Teacher candidate reflects on the first 6 weeks. He or she identifies an area for growth and develops a systematic plan to improve that area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After reading reflections, author selects approximately 1/3 of videos to watch and evaluate.</li> <li>• Individual conferences are scheduled with each student to address areas of strength and areas for growth.</li> </ul>
<b>Weeks 8-9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher candidate (with approval of author) asks peer to watch for specific problems or concerns during the teaching experience and records them.</li> <li>• Teacher candidate writes up a brief summary of those concerns and his or her progress in correcting them.</li> </ul>	After reading reflections, author selects approximately 1/3 of videos to watch and evaluate.
<b>Week 10</b>	Teacher candidate examines all reflections and evaluations from peers and author. He or she writes a summary of areas of growth during this experience and areas he or she would like to improve in the high school methods courses.	Individual conference is scheduled with author to assess progress.

ing because the teacher candidate in charge still had total control of the lesson.

During all sessions, another member of the group operated the video camera. This person followed the movements of the teacher candidate and made sure the wireless microphone was working properly. By the third or fourth week of the program, the college students who were not teaching or videotaping were asked to perform peer assessments on the individual teaching. The teacher candidates were very familiar with the rubric (figure 3), as it was an extension of the evaluation form used during their elementary placement,

and it had been practiced in class. After the peer completed the assessment rubric, he or she used it as the basis to list at least five areas of strength and five areas for growth for the teacher candidate. Both parties met and discussed the evaluation at the end of the day. This peer assessment and the resulting dialogue helped both the peer and the teacher candidate to improve their pedagogical skills.

All lessons were videotaped. This allowed the teacher candidates an opportunity to observe themselves and reflect on strengths and weaknesses. It also assisted the author in evaluating the individual teacher candidates and events oc-





Both photos by Kent Booley

At left, Chris Gibbs teaches students how to use pedometers, a regular component of the *PE x 3* program. At right, students learn to use resistance bands under the direction of Jamie Sherwood.

curing in the program. Comments and suggestions about the teaching skills were provided to each teacher candidate every week. Table 3 summarizes the methods used to assess the quality of the teacher candidates' instruction.

These assignments and the videotape were submitted to the author by 10:00 a.m. each Friday morning. This timetable permitted the author to evaluate performance and provide feedback before the next class meeting or individually scheduled conferences.

While the analysis of videotapes was essential to evaluating the teaching skills of the teacher candidates, it also assisted the author in monitoring the behavior of the middle school students. Since the author was able to observe all of the middle school students in all of the activities on videotape, she could easily see whether problems were occurring in more than one area. If a middle schooler was reprimanded in several activities, then the author would counsel that child about proper behavior at the beginning of the next week's program. The teacher candidates handled the small problems, but when a pattern of misbehavior could be seen through the tapes, it was best handled by the author. This rarely happened.

The author also observed student improvement through the videotapes. The middle schoolers could be observed improving their skills, exhibiting positive leadership, and assisting other students. In these instances, which occurred every week, the author would praise the individual student for showing such positive behaviors. This further reinforced the program's emphasis on the affective domain.

When the teaching was over for the day, the teacher candidate was not through. In the *PE x 3* program, the teacher candidates also learned about supervision. Not only did they supervise locker rooms and class changes, but students waiting for the bus or other rides home. The author spent the entire time as a supervisor, moving from activity to activity and supervising both the teacher candidates and the middle school students. The supervision at the end of the

day was crucial to ensure that each child had the correct ride home. Initially, the teacher candidates were new to supervision. Therefore, during the first week of the program additional members of the HRK faculty were brought in to assist with dismissal.

The first 15 minutes of every methods class was set aside for discussion of problems and solutions concerning the after-school program. At times, situations from *PE x 3* consumed much longer than 15 minutes of class time. However, these discussions and brainstorming sessions produced strategies for assisting specific students (middle school and college) and for improving teaching techniques and instruction.

### Challenges During Implementation

A project of this scope requires constant refinement and adjustments. However, there have been very few major challenges since the program began. Longwood University shares a strong partnership with Prince Edward County Public Schools. Only once has a discipline concern arisen. In that instance, the author met with the middle school's vice principal the next day. The student was called in, and the problem was corrected. The student remained in the program at the request of the author and with the approval of the administrator. However, clear behavior guidelines were established by the school's administrator. As the program progressed, that student became one of the program's most active participants and a positive role model for the other students.

On one occasion a teacher candidate was not yet ready to teach a group of 15 middle school students. This was determined by the author through conferences with the individual teacher candidate after observing his first teaching experience. In this situation, the group was divided, and he became responsible for fewer students. His peers taught the remainder of the students. Within a few weeks, the candidate was ready to return to working with the entire group and

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## Colvin

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performed quite well.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to be faced was student transportation. It was imperative for the middle schoolers to know which activity bus they would ride home. The second year of the program, enrollment was broadened to include sixth graders. Unfortunately, few of them knew which bus to ride that first afternoon. The author spent the afternoon on the phone with parents trying to determine how children were to get home. Activity bus information is now included on the permission form. In addition, the program now uses sign-out sheets for children being picked up early.

## Conclusion

In an after-school program such as *PE x 3*, everyone wins. The middle school students received a quality, organized physical education experience. They participated in small groups, with enough equipment for every child, and received individual attention from motivated, enthusiastic young professionals.

The teacher candidates helped to develop a quality program in which to work with students. They were invested in the program and the children. In every aspect *PE x 3* provided a "best practices" experience. The teacher candidates learned about lesson plan development and implementation, classroom organization, behavior management, and supervision. The wide range of skill levels and the various characteristics of middle school students taught the teacher candidates to "think on their feet." The growth in the teacher candidates was incredible.

Coordinating an after-school practicum experience was much more labor intensive for the author than merely assigning PETE majors to schools. However, the benefits of the program far outweighed the challenges. Longwood University's PETE majors point to *PE x 3* as an excellent learning opportunity. The teacher candidates gained valuable teaching experience, the middle school students learned new skills, and a strong bridge with the community became even stronger.

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